

# How Wide Is the Gulf between PPP and TBLT?

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## PPPとTBLTの溝はどれくらい大きいのか？

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本論では、PPPアプローチとタスクに基づく言語指導（TBLT）の比較に基づき、日本人中高生の英語運用能力の育成に適うPPPアプローチへの改善を模索する。まず、(a) TBLTが学校教育での英語指導において適当でない理由、及び(b) PPPアプローチの方が適している理由を論じ、改訂PPPアプローチを提示する。改訂PPPアプローチは明示的言語知識の活用に関してはTBLTと大きく異なるが、英語運用能力の育成における英語使用の重要性に関しては一致しており、両者間の溝は余り大きくないことが示される。併せて、学校教育の英語指導における改訂PPPアプローチの運用に関する示唆も示される。

キーワード：PPP, TBLT, 学校教育, 明示的言語知識

### 1. Introduction

Methodologies may not be at the center of English language teaching (ELT) any longer. Progressive researchers and educationists consider it more important to create collaborative learning conditions among learners and teachers through exploratory practice (Allwright & Hanks, 2009)<sup>(1)</sup>. Even conservatives who advocate traditional language teaching deny sticking to particular methodologies or approaches because their effective application is limited to certain learners in certain learning situations (Swan, 2005)<sup>(2)</sup>. However, there is still a hot methodology issue between Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and the PPP (presentation-practice-production) approach.

TBLT is a legitimate successor to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), endorsed by second language acquisition (SLA) research. This language teaching is based on tasks whose characteristics are meaning-centeredness, outcome-orientedness and real-world authenticity (Ellis, 2003a<sup>(3)</sup>; Van den Branden, 2006<sup>(4)</sup>; Willis & Willis, 2007<sup>(5)</sup>). Also included, as its characteristics, are learner-centeredness in instruction and focus on form in meaning- or communication-centered tasks. These characteristics are supported by cognitive

SLA research with Online, Noticing and Teachability Hypotheses (Swan, 2005).

On the other hand, according to Richards and Rodgers (2001)<sup>(6)</sup>, PPP was originally the teaching procedure used in Oral Approach or Situational Language Teaching, which was a mainstream approach before CLT. This approach was familiar to Japanese ELT contexts, to which Harold Palmer and A. S. Hornby made great contributions. Its language theory was mainly based on British structurism that regarded speech as primary and structure-based. Its language learning theory was behaviorist habit formation. Its instruction, aiming at balanced abilities of four skills, was conducted teacher-centeredly in the PPP procedure, following its structural syllabuses and vocabulary lists.

In the presentation stage of the PPP procedure, targeted structures are inductively presented orally in English. In the practice stage, the structures are mechanically drilled with the aim of their automatic use. Errors noticed in the drills are corrected to avoid their reinforcement. In the production stage, the learned structures are used freely in speaking and writing activities. Often, however, the last stage is omitted on the assumption that the structures can be automated in the practice stage.

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The PPP approach remained popular in the 80s and early 90s, partly because it was usually used as a part of training for TEFL certificates. However, it has been harshly criticized, by SLA researchers and CLT / TBLT advocates, mainly for its behaviorist mechanical learning of structures. Their critical views were represented as “... we can do PPP until we are blue in the face, but it doesn't necessarily result in what PPP was designed to do” (Ellis, 1993<sup>(7)</sup>, p. 4). Since then, similar criticism has been pervasive, paradoxically because the PPP approach has stayed and been used in English teaching classes around the world, especially in EFL contexts.

For example, in Asian countries Korea, China, Taiwan and even in Hong Kong where English is a second language, TBLT is not popular among teachers and students, despite being strongly promoted by their central education departments. The PPP approach or task-supported language teaching (TSLT) is preferred there because of their pedagogical cultures, teacher language proficiency, class size and other resources (Adams & Newton, 2009<sup>(8)</sup>; Carless, 2009<sup>(9)</sup>; Jeon & Hahn, 2006<sup>(10)</sup>; Liao, 2002<sup>(11)</sup>; Pei, 2008<sup>(12)</sup>). This preference of the PPP approach would be shared by Japanese teachers and learners. As a matter of fact, the preference was once substantiated as failures of CLT trials in our formal education in the 80s and 90s.

Moreover, there are theoretical reasons that do not easily allow TBLT to be used in the contexts of Japan, which are implicit language learning and task-based syllabuses. Although TBLT is frequently said to be based on no particular language theories, its language learning mechanism lies primarily in implicit learning, innately or emergently. Also, this language teaching, whose syllabuses are naturally task-based, strongly opposes structural syllabuses that do not comply with Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1989)<sup>(13)</sup>. If so, is it possible for the instruction to develop communicative proficiency of Japanese learners, who have been taught explicitly with structural syllabuses?

Concerning these points, the PPP approach that uses explicit teaching, deductively or inductively, with structural syllabuses, may be more appropriate for our contexts. Although this approach requires improvement in its effectiveness, it may progress into a revised PPP approach with more efficacy,

through theoretical reevaluation performed recently in SLA research and cognitive psychology, pertaining to the concept of practice (DeKeyser, 2007)<sup>(14)</sup>, the three-stage teaching procedure supported by a skill-acquisition theory ACT-R (Anderson, 2007)<sup>(15)</sup>, and the use of explicit language knowledge.

This paper first examines and discusses why TBLT is not appropriate for ELT at secondary school in Japan, concerning implicit learning and task-based syllabuses. Second, it discloses why the PPP approach is more appropriate in terms of explicit language knowledge and skill acquisition. Finally, it unveils a revised PPP approach with implications for ELT at secondary education in Japan.

## 2. Why TBLT is not Appropriate

### 2.1 Implicit Learning

The language learning mechanism of TBLT is theoretically founded on cognitive SLA research. It has been consented there that languages are acquired mainly through implicit learning, innately or emergently. According to the nativist account originated by Noam Chomsky, anyone without dysfunctions in language learning organs can acquire languages, first or second, given enough language input to activate his or her innate language learning devices, with the proviso that he or she has not reached a biological critical period, in Lenneberg's (1967)<sup>(16)</sup> sense, beyond which the devices deteriorate severely. This acquisition process requires no formal education or explicit teaching.

On the other hand, emergentists consider language learning as one of general cognitive learning. Although language learning is highly complex, it is implicitly processed as is many other types of general cognition, without any domain-specific innate devices. According to this view, we can learn languages, first or second, without awareness of the learning, mainly through performing analogical processing of language input repeatedly. This process not being involved with any domain-specific innate devices, our language learning basically depends upon its frequency, i.e., the more processing, the more learning. Although this learning process is time consuming, language knowledge learned implicitly is rigid once obtained.

Implicit language learning has been taken for

granted in SLA research, whose main interest has been in ESL contexts where learners enjoy plenty of occasions to learn English implicitly out of formal education. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982)<sup>(17)</sup> that allows comprehensible input to take care of language acquisition was based on the nativist view. So was Long's original Interaction Hypothesis (1983)<sup>(18)</sup> that underscores negotiations mainly for generating comprehensible input. Although this staunch nativist view began to weaken when immersion programs in Canada revealed that comprehensible input could not develop learner productive proficiency satisfactorily, it has been persistent on the essential role that implicit learning plays in language acquisition.

Since Swain's Output Hypothesis (1985)<sup>(19)</sup> appeared to modify the nativist view, noticing and focus on form have been highlighted in SLA research until now. Noticing, with its emergentist origin, means initial registration of language forms that allows the following implicit learning to occur (Schmidt, 2001)<sup>(20)</sup>. Focus on form is pedagogical treatment of structures with which learners face difficulty in meaning-centered tasks (Long, 1997)<sup>(21)</sup>. Although these concepts, often used in wider senses, possibly involve explicit language knowledge, proactively in noticing and reactively in focus on form, they are just enhancers of the primary language learning mechanics, i.e., implicit learning. This is what is claimed by Online Hypothesis: language learning occurs when it is being used communicatively (Doughty, 2001)<sup>(22)</sup>. Since Noticing and Online Hypotheses are the basis of TBLT, it is clear that this language teaching regards implicit learning as the primary engine of language acquisition.

There are no problems with TBLT using implicit learning as its acquisition mechanics, as far as ESL contexts, with abundant occasions for language use, are concerned. However, it is problematic in such EFL contexts as Japan, where language use is restricted to formal education. There are two main reasons for this. One reason concerns the time-consuming nature of the learning mode. Since implicit learning, innately or emergently, requires a great deal of online processing in language use, our formal language education, often with less than 100 hours a year, simply cannot provide enough opportunities for it. The other regards the onset of

our ELT. The instruction starts mainly at secondary school when learners are approaching or have attained puberty. This late onset makes it difficult for innate implicit learning to take place because it is around these ages that the biological critical period may exist, if any (DeKeyser & Larson-Hall, 2005)<sup>(23)</sup>. Also, the onset timing does not easily allow emergent implicit learning to occur because learners are matured enough to rely more on explicit learning, which is more efficient but fragile.

When even Canadian immersion programs, which lasted for a considerable time from primary education, could not satisfactorily develop communicative proficiency, it is improbable to foster the ability in our formal education through implicit learning. This is endorsed by Critical Period Hypothesis, the weak version: "language acquisition from mere exposure (i.e., implicit learning), the only mechanism available to the young child, is severely limited in older adolescents and adults" (DeKeyser & Larson-Hall, 2005, p. 89). Consequently, an often-repeated claim of TBLT advocates, that TBLT best suits EFL contexts where opportunities for language use is highly limited (Long, 1997; Ellis, 2003a), is wrong. Instead, it is recommended that EFL contexts should make an effective use of explicit language knowledge to compensate for the limited language use.

## 2.2 Focus on Form

The argument against implicit language learning may be rebutted by TBLT advocates claiming that the weakness can be compensated for by focus on form, which is now an indispensable part of the teaching. However, it should be remembered that focus on form is conducted only when learners have trouble with structures while performing meaning-focused tasks, whose main purpose is online implicit learning through use. In other words, the form-focused part, no matter how vital it may be, is just supplementary to the online processing of information.

Another shortcoming of focus on form lies in its theoretical ground, i.e., Noticing and Teachability Hypotheses. The former explains: (a) when learners register structures that are prominent orthographically, phonologically or lexically, the noticed forms may be implicitly learned, through

being frequently processed, in due course (Schmidt, 2001); and (b) when they have difficulties with structures in communication-centered tasks, learners may recognize gaps or holes between their and target usage, i.e., notice the gaps or holes, and get closer to the restructure of their language systems (Swain, 1995<sup>(24)</sup>). The latter restricts focused structures that can be learned to those which learners have developed readiness for learning (Pienemman, 1989). Consequently, structures that can be learned through focus on form are limited to those which meet the three conditions, i.e., to be noticed, to be ready for being acquired, and to be frequently processed.

Despite this stringent restriction, focus on form may help learners in ESL contexts, where opportunities for implicit language learning are abundant in real use of languages, with a proviso that there has hardly been any empirical or pedagogical evidence confirming the effectiveness of focus on form (Swan, 2005). However, it is far short of developing language proficiency of our secondary school learners who cannot rely much on implicit learning for fostering the ability. This is because focus on form cannot cover structures that do not appear in language use among learners with unsophisticated language proficiency. Since most of our secondary school learners are at elementary and pre-intermediate proficiency levels, it is improbable that focus on form, supplementing implicit language learning, can cover most of necessary structures, helping to achieve learner language proficiency.

In this case, necessary structures should be specified in syllabuses so that they can be instructed. In other words, structural syllabuses should be used instead of task-based ones, which aim at implicit language learning with the aid of focus on form. By now, it has been revealed that TBLT is inappropriate for our ELT at secondary education because of the two main principles of TBLT, implicit learning and focus on form. Consequently, it is recommended that our formal ELT should develop learner language proficiency by effectively using explicit instruction with structural syllabuses.

### 3. Why the PPP Approach is Appropriate

#### 3.1 Explicit Learning

In our formal ELT, where learners cannot acquire

languages through implicit learning and focus on form, it is natural that explicit language instruction should be used. Even in SLA research, whose main interest centers on implicit learning, the co-operation of explicit and implicit learning began to be explored (Ellis, et al., 2009<sup>(25)</sup>; Dörnyei, 2009<sup>(26)</sup>). One reason for this lies in the acknowledged inability of implicit learning in achieving its supposed function of developing learner communicative proficiency. Another comes from empirical evidence showing that explicit grammar learning is more effective than implicit learning (Ellis, et al., 2009). Furthermore, essential concepts in language learning, such as attention and noticing, often involve explicit language knowledge. It seems that the significance of explicit learning and teaching is not confined to our formal ELT.

#### 3.2 ACT-R

Despite the significance of explicit instruction, when followed by practice and production, i.e., PPP, it has been criticized by TBLT advocates and SLA researchers who take non- and weak-interface positions between explicit and implicit knowledge. The criticism was leveled mainly at the arbitrariness of choosing structures, irrelevant of built-in learner syllabus, ignoring his or her readiness for them. Also criticized was the mechanical practice of them. In other words, the behaviorist view of language learning, substantiated as the PPP approach, was disapproved of by the nativist view.

Recently, however, the PPP approach was detached from the criticism, to some degree, when it was reevaluated by a skill-acquisition theory, ACT-R (Adaptive Control of Theory-Rational; Anderson, et al., 2004<sup>(27)</sup>), in cognitive psychology. This reevaluation was performed because language learning certainly has an aspect of skill acquisition. According to this theory, no matter how complex it may be, language learning is one of general cognitive learning, without domain-specific learning devices. This is in line with the emergentist view which supports implicit language learning.

Another similarity between them lies in the importance of frequency in the learning process. Emergentists explain that the development of implicit language learning depends on the frequency of information processing in communicative use of

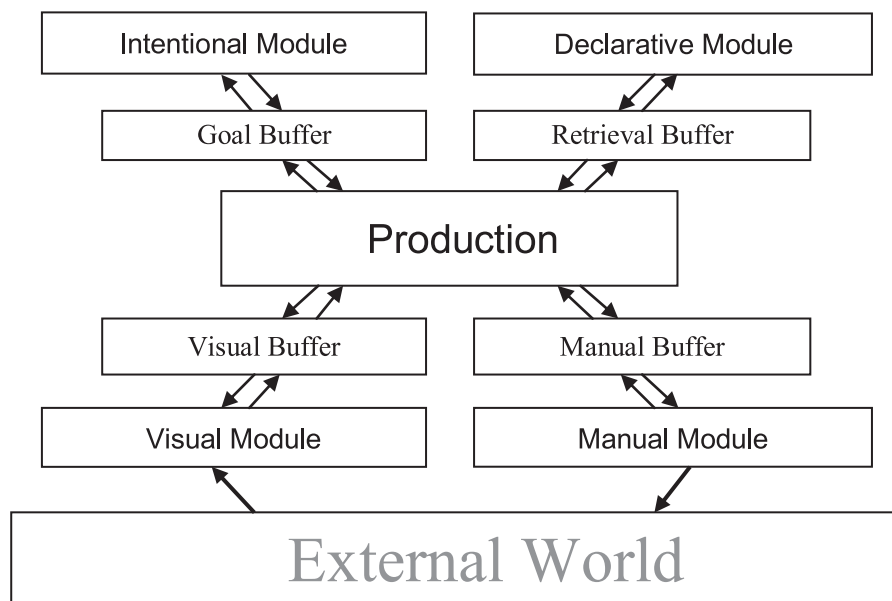


Figure 1. The Organization of ACT-R

language. ACT-R similarly claims the significance of processing frequency in the development of implicit language knowledge that takes place through actual use or performance of language skills and sub-skills. This theory acknowledges the significance such that language learning follows the power law of learning. However, there is one process that unequivocally distinguishes ACT-R from the emergentist view. This is the process in which explicit knowledge plays a vital role against the emergentist position. Mainly through this, implicit knowledge is developed through repeated use or performance of skills or sub-skills. In other words, implicit knowledge can be hardly learned without its explicit knowledge. This explicit and implicit knowledge is called respectively declarative and procedural knowledge in ACT-R, which supports the interface between them.

The ACT-R architecture composes of five modules, which are intentional, declarative, visual, manual and production modules, the last of which is also called the production system (Figure 1; Anderson, et al., 2004). The first four modules store information, and the production system executes goals with information retrieved from the modules into the corresponding buffers, where only a chunk of information is available for each buffer. Although the figure shows only two perceptual and motor modules, the architecture implements others such as aural and vocal modules (Taatgen, 2005<sup>(28)</sup>).

This architecture employs a hybrid method for information processing. Each module basically processes information serially, but modules do so in parallel with each other. The production system serially executes goals with information in buffers so that the executions may not overlap.

The learning of ACT-R develops through three stages, i.e. declarative, procedural and automatic stages. The first stage is where declarative knowledge of a skill or cognitive act is acquired. With the declarative knowledge, in the second stage, the skill or act is used or performed so that its proceduralization may occur. In the third stage, the skill or act is continued to be performed until its automatization, where the skill or act is performed speedily and flawlessly, takes place.

This learning process is also assumed in language learning. Let us take the learning of the passive construction, *be + past participle*, as an example. Although this learning may involve aural and vocal modules in addition to the five modules in the figure, a limited account is given of the process involving the intentional, declarative and production modules, at the center of the learning, for the sake of simplicity.

In the declarative stage, learners are given explicit knowledge for the construction, i.e., the grammar rule or exemplars. This knowledge allows them to use the passive construction as in *The window was broken yesterday*. When a learner, who

has no difficulty in appropriately using *to be* and the past participles of transitive verbs, wants to use the passive construction as it is in the sentence, his or her processing of the construction is accounted for as: (a) the first goal for retrieving the grammar rule is taken from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (b) the goal is executed in the production system; (c) the grammar rule is retrieved from the declarative module into the retrieval buffer; (d) the second goal for executing the grammar rule is taken from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (e) the goal is executed in the production system; (f) *was broken* is taken from the declarative module into the retrieval buffer; (g) the third goal for using *was broken* in the sentence is taken from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (h) this goal is executed in the production system; and (i) *was broken* is used in the sentence.

This nine steps process is performed through the execution of the production rules. These rules that unconsciously perform the production system are different from explicit rules stored in the declarative module. They consist of at least three steps as in (a) to (c), (d) to (f), and (g) to (i) in the procedure. Although this imaginary learner, who has a good knowledge of using the appropriate form of *to be* in the sentence and the past participle of *break*, does not require sub production rules for searching for them, such rules may be necessary for many learners at this proficiency level. Moreover, when the explicit knowledge is given in the form of exemplars, learners need to find the passive structure by analogy, which requires other production rules. Consequently, the processing of the passive construction at this stage can be far more complex than the above procedure for many learners. Since each production rule takes much longer in the execution than the minimum requirement, 50 milliseconds, the time-consuming nature of processing in the declarative stage is obvious.

In the procedural stage, learners learn to use the passive construction without the help of the explicit knowledge from the declarative module, which is called proceduralization. This takes place when the production rules, as shown above in the last stage, are executed repeatedly in the production system. The mechanism of proceduralization is a process called production compilation, where production

rules performed in a routinized manner are compiled into smaller numbers of rules.

Let us return to the aforementioned imaginary learner who continues to use the construction, *be + past participle*. When he or she wants to use the construction in *The watch was repaired last week.*, the processing is performed as: (a) the first goal for using the construction in the sentence is retrieved from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (b) the goal is executed in the production system; (c) *was repaired* is retrieved from the declarative module into the retrieval buffer; (d) the second goal for using *was repaired* in the sentence is retrieved from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (e) the goal is executed in the production system; and (f) *was repaired* is used in the sentence. This procedure collapsed three production rules, in the declarative stage, into two by omitting the retrieval of the grammar rule from the declarative module.

The concept of proceduralization may often be misunderstood as showing that the declarative knowledge of a skill or cognitive act changes into its procedural knowledge through repeated use or performance of the skill or act. Despite the apparent transformation of knowledge nature, proceduralization means routinized performance of production rules that takes place in the production system when the skill is repeatedly used. The explicit knowledge remains in the declarative module, until it is forgotten, but is no longer required in this stage.

After proceduralization, as the execution of the goals is repeated, the processing develops greater efficiency to a level where it can be performed instantly and unconsciously, which is called automatization. This is seen in the imaginary learner of the passive construction. Two production rules of his or hers in the procedural stage finally collapsed into one. When he or she wants to use the construction in *The new tower was built last year.*, the processing is: (a) the goal for using the construction in the sentence is retrieved from the intentional module into the goal buffer; (b) the goal is executed in the production system; and (c) *was built* is used in the sentence. His or her automatic use of this construction takes only 50 milliseconds at this stage.

As shown so far, the learning of ACT-R develops through the declarative, procedural and

automatic stages. Since these three learning stages correspond to the stages of PPP, i.e., presentation, practice and production stages, PPP has been recently reinterpreted as a teaching procedure that reflects ACT-R (DeKeyser, 1998<sup>(29)</sup>; Ranta & Lyster, 2007<sup>(30)</sup>).

This interpretation may have a problem concerning practice in the second stage, whose mechanical nature, based on the behaviorist view, was a reason for the denial of the PPP approach. However, practice has been redefined as actually using or performing a skill or cognitive act in SLA research (DeKeyser, 1998; 2003<sup>(31)</sup>; 2007). This concept matches the procedural stage that gets a skill or cognitive act to be performed without its explicit knowledge through its actual use. It may also apply to the automatic stage that gets the skill or act to be naturally performed through its repeated use. What differentiates practice in these stages is how much focus is put on the skill or act. The procedural stage gets learners to particularly use the skill or act, and the automatic stage to naturally use it in general production. It seems that the redefinition of practice contributes to the revision of the PPP approach.

It has been shown that this revised PPP approach is more appropriate for our secondary ELT than TBLT. The main reason for this is explicit knowledge that the PPP approach makes the most use of but TBLT basically tries to avoid. However, the approach and the teaching are similar in two ways: to regard language learning as one of general cognitive learning; and to emphasize the importance of processing frequency. The latter sends us a significant message that language learning requires a great deal of language use, whether it is involved with explicit language knowledge or not. Therefore, it is underscored that the revised PPP approach should provide plenty of opportunities for language use so that structures learned with the help of explicit knowledge may be used naturally.

## 4. Revised PPP Approach

### 4.1 Characteristics

The revised PPP approach aims at fostering learner communicative proficiency through practicing or actually using language with the help of its explicit knowledge specified in structural syllabuses. This approach possesses characteristics

that are supported by ACT-R and SLA research (DeKeyser, 1998; Ranta & Lyster, 2007). First, it puts more emphasis on the development of language fluency. This is achieved by practicing or actually performing language skills or sub-skills through the process of their proceduralization and automatization. This practice does not exclude the use of tasks, which are not as specified in TBLT but are more generally defined as “outcome-oriented instructional segment or a behavioral framework for classroom learning” (Oxford, 2006<sup>(32)</sup>, p. 97). The revision elevated the role of practice from a mechanical tool of proceduralization to a cognitive executor of proceduralization and automatization.

Second, the approach puts importance to productive language use, paying attention to language forms. This follows a suggestion from SLA research which shows that awareness or noticing of language forms in language production is vital for language learning. It is natural that the PPP approach should pay heed to language forms because it takes advantage of explicit knowledge to develop implicit language knowledge. When language forms are noticed to be registered in your language use, it marks the beginning of your learning them, implicitly or explicitly (Dörnyei, 2009). However, your noticing the gaps or holes, between your target and learner languages, does not take place without the relevant explicit knowledge (Ellis, 2003a). Therefore, the noticed structures should be taught with their rules and exemplars, or their use should be proceduralized with the explicit knowledge retrieved. Another option for this is the use of consciousness-raising activities or tasks, which inductively lead learners to obtain the explicit knowledge. Moreover, noticing-enhancing activities or tasks that put prominence on aimed structures are also recommended.

Third, the approach seeks for a balanced development of language forms and functions. This is because ELT history has revealed that neither accuracy- nor fluency-based methods and approaches can satisfactorily foster communicative language proficiency. Without mentioning accuracy-based methods and approaches, fluency-based ones cannot avoid this. After the failure of Canadian immersion programs, SLA research was forced to modify its claim on language acquisition totally

relying on implicit learning, and TBLT incorporated focus on form as its integral part. Consequently, the cooperation of explicit and implicit language teaching and learning recently began to be pursued. This is where the revised PPP approach can make a significant contribution because it utilizes explicit knowledge for the development of its implicit knowledge.

stage 1	Explicit grammar teaching	(presentation)
stage 2	Practice	
	(a) Meaningful activities	(practice)
	(b) Communicative activities	(production)

Figure 2. A Procedure of Cognitive Code Learning

stage 1	Awareness phase	(presentation)
stage 2	Practice phase	(practice)
stage 3	Feedback phase	(production)

Figure 3. A Three-Phase Model

#### 4.2 Procedures

The characteristics of the revised PPP approach are reflected in procedures suggested by DeKeyser (1998) and Ranta and Lyster (2007). DeKeyser (1998) considers Cognitive Code Learning (CCL), which appeared after Chomsky's denial of the behaviorist language learning, as substantiating the cognitive PPP approach (Figure 2). This procedure consists of two stages, explicit teaching and practice. Since the latter stage has two different types of practice, explicit teaching and meaningful and communicative activities respectively correspond to the presentation, practice and production stages. Importantly, the concept of practice in CCL is close to that of the revised PPP approach in being meaningful and actually performing. Moreover, this procedure puts reading activities or tasks in the final stage, not in the presentation stage, so that the activities or tasks may enhance: (a) the noticing and proceduralization of taught structures; and (b) the establishment of form-meaning links.

Ranta and Lyster (2007) suggested a three-phase model (Figure 3) with a view to integrating the PPP approach with SLA research findings. It has three phases, which are awareness, practice and feedback phases, respectively corresponding to the presentation, practice and production stages. This model, based on ACT (Anderson, 1983)<sup>(33)</sup>, aims at

developing language communicative proficiency through the proceduralization and automatization of language skills and sub-skills mainly by practicing them. It also tries to make efficient use of SLA research findings. The first stage seeks to raise learner awareness of forms in such an inductive manner as consciousness raising. The second stage gets learners to repeatedly use the attended forms in communication drills so that they can proceduralize the use of the forms. The final stage gets them to focus on the forms by providing reformations or prompts as feedback, which may lead to them noticing the gaps and restructuring their learner languages. That is why these stages are called the awareness, practice and feedback phases.

Since the revised PPP approach tries to make use of SLA research findings, its recommended procedures may look closer to those of TBLT. As a matter of fact, these procedures are often equivalent to those of TSLT, task-supported language teaching, which utilizes tasks more loosely than TBLT for fostering language communicative proficiency. Although TSLT may be condemned by TBLT advocates who claim that TSLT is a modified PPP approach with tasks used in the production stage (Ellis, 2003a), there are cases where advocates of TBLT recommend procedures interpreted as those of TSLT.

Figure 4 shows a form-focused sequence of tasks recommended by Ellis (2003b)<sup>(34)</sup>. There, stages 1 to 3 can be considered the presentation stages. The first task orally presents the teaching material. The second task, based on the listening material,

stage 1	Listening task	(presentation)
stage 2	Noticing task	(presentation)
stage 3	Consciousness-raising task	(presentation)
stage 4	Checking task	(practice)
stage 5	Production task	(production)

Figure 4. A Form-Focused Sequence of Tasks

stage 1	Pre-task	
stage 2	Task cycle	(production)
	(a) task planning	
	(b) doing the task	
	(c) preparing to report on the task	
	(d) presenting the task report	
stage 3	Language focus	(presentation / practice)

Figure 5. A Procedure of TBLT



stage 1	Schema building	(presentation)
stage 2	Controlling practice embedded in a context	(practice)
stage 3	Authentic receptive skills work	(production / presentation)
stage 4	A focus on form	(presentation / practice)
stage 5	Freer practice	(practice)
stage 6	The task itself	(production)

Figure 6. A Six-Stage Procedure of TBLT

invites some noticing to occur in learners. The third task tries to raise learner consciousness of the noticed forms so that their explicit knowledge may be learned. Then, stages 4 and 5 can be regarded as the practice and production stages respectively. The fourth task, getting learners to use the forms repeatedly, checks whether they are properly used. The final task gets learners to freely use the learned forms in the meaning-focused task. This sequence should not belong to TBLT because: (a) it puts artificial prominence on forms to be noticed; (b) it leads learners to the explicit knowledge for which they may not be ready; and (c) it includes a task meant for repeated use of particular forms.

Figure 5 shows a teaching procedure suggested by Willis (1996)<sup>(35)</sup>, another leading advocate of TBLT. This is one of prototypical procedures of the teaching, which Willis calls a task-based framework. The second stage, following the introductory task, contains four communication-focused tasks at the core of this procedure. Then comes focus on form at the last stage, where structures wrongly used in the task cycle are focused mainly through consciousness raising. This stage also allows the structures to be practiced, in the behaviorist sense, if necessary.

This procedure has sometimes been called “PPP in reverse” because the procedural order associates us with the production stage followed by the presentation and practice stages. Supposedly, its main stage is the task cycle, but there are cases expected where more time needs to be appropriated for the pre-task and language focus stages. One such case may be for learners below intermediate levels, like many Japanese junior and senior high school students, who are struggling to develop their syntactical and lexical knowledge. Although this is not always the case, when language focus, mainly with consciousness raising and mechanical practice, is the central stage preceded by meaning-

focused tasks, it is not far from TSLT, which adopts meaning-focused tasks for its production stage, following the presentation and practice stages.

Figure 6 reveals a six-stage procedure that another leading TBLT-methodologist Nunan (2004)<sup>(36)</sup> suggested. This is a practical procedure that makes use of pedagogical tasks, which are “not to provide learners with an opportunity to rehearse some out-of-class performance but to activate their emerging reproductive language use” (p. 20).

The first stage creates the context for tasks by introducing a topic, aimed vocabulary and structures. The second stage gets learners to practice the lexical items, forms and functions in the context that alleviates the artificialness of the controlling practice. These two stages are actually presenting and practicing stages. The third stage provides authentic listening or reading tasks. They are receptive production tasks, one purpose of which is to get learners to understand, or process the comprehension of, the practiced vocabulary and structures. The fourth stage gets learners to notice the aimed forms by raising learner awareness of them. Since these tasks artificially force learners, who have not probably developed readiness for the taught structures, to notice them, they can be interpreted as presenting the taught forms again. The fifth stage provides learners with opportunities to practice the structures in less controlled tasks. Finally, in the sixth stage, learners are given pedagogical tasks to freely produce English. This procedure can be used smoothly in our formal education because it is by no means far from TSLT, or the revised PPP approach we suggest.

In summary, the PPP approach has undergone a cognitive transformation. The revised PPP approach, grounded on ACT-R and SLA research, is not a behaviorist approach any more. It obtains characteristics reflecting their findings, such as consciousness raising and noticing, and utilizes interaction in tasks. Consequently, the revised PPP approach is now TSLT seen from the perspective of TBLT. Furthermore, it is often that procedures of TBLT can be considered as those of TSLT, or the revised PPP approach, when they contain consciousness-raising and form-focused tasks, with the help of explicit knowledge. As far as the procedures are concerned, it seems that there is not

much difference between the revised PPP approach and TBLT.

## 5. Conclusion

Despite the transformation of the PPP approach, it has not been acknowledged by TBLT methodologists and supporters, who keep negative views of “PPP”. This may be partially because TBLT can claim its merits more clearly, contrasted with the behaviorist PPP approach. When the teaching claims the legitimacy of its characteristics, including meaningful learning, implicit learning, fluency-based learning, meaning-centeredness, student-centeredness and authentic language use, it sharply contradicts those of the behaviorist PPP approach, which are mechanical learning, explicit learning, accuracy-based learning, form-centeredness, teacher-centeredness, and concocted language use.

However, the revised PPP approach does not possess many of these characteristics any more. This approach prefers meaningful learning, grounded on a cognitive architecture ACT-R. Although it may use concocted language in explicit teaching of structures and in tasks aiming at accuracy in the process of proceduralization, the approach requires learners to practice, or actually use language, in pedagogical tasks in the process of automatization. These tasks can be conducted meaning-centeredly and learner-centeredly. Except for explicit teaching, which this approach makes the most use of but TBLT basically tries to avoid, many of the characteristics are shared between the approach and the teaching.

Since both the approach and the teaching share their theoretical backgrounds in cognitive psychology, they similarly consider language learning as one of general learning, and emphasize the importance of processing frequency. In other words, as is the case with other cognition, they both require learners to use a great deal of language, with the help of its explicit knowledge or not, in order to acquire its communicative proficiency. This similarity is reflected in their teaching procedures. Procedures of the approach, which has imported consciousness-raising and pedagogical tasks, are now equivalent with those of TSLT. On the other hand, TBLT procedures, which make use of structure-focused tasks, often appear to be those of TSLT.

Conclusively, the gulf between the revised PPP approach and TBLT is not so wide. The gulf admittedly lies in the divide between explicit and implicit teaching. However, the difference between the approach and the teaching may not be binary but rather gradual on the scale between implicit and explicit teaching. The approach and the teaching both seek to develop learner implicit knowledge of English through using English. The former pursues this with the help of explicit knowledge and the latter originally without it. However, TBLT began to assign explicit knowledge a larger role to play in language learning, and SLA research began exploring the cooperation of explicit and implicit teaching. On the other hand, ACT-R, supporting the revised PPP approach, began admitting the possibility of learning implicit knowledge without the help of explicit knowledge (Anderson, 2007). Therefore, the gulf is certainly shallower between the two. It is necessary to strike a balance between explicit and implicit teaching, depending on learning and teaching contexts.

## 6. Pedagogical Implications

This section provides pedagogical implications for formal ELT in Japan, concerning how the revised PPP approach is performed in secondary school classrooms. Characteristics of the approach that should not be dismissed in our context are: (a) to make an effective use of explicit knowledge; (b) to expand learner use of English with tasks; and (c) to make a flexible use of the PPP procedure. Another indispensable characteristic, i.e., the use of structural syllabuses, is excluded because they have been an integral part of our formal ELT.

First, it is vital to provide learners with explicit knowledge, language rules or exemplars, either deductively or inductively. Explicit knowledge is a key of the revised approach that helps learners to develop their implicit language knowledge, or communicative proficiency of English. Without it, Japanese secondary school learners would have difficulty learning English. This knowledge can be given to learners deductively in explicit teaching as rules and inductively in consciousness raising as exemplars. It should be used to proceduralize the use of language structures cognitively in form-focused tasks, not mechanically in pattern practice. It should

be also used to self-correct errors noticed in the practice, or the real use, of language in the process of automatization. It is important to utilize explicit knowledge effectively, based on the principle of the revised approach.

Second, it is significant to expand learner opportunities of English use. One reason for this is that Japanese high school ELT, affected by the grammar-translation method and the behaviorist PPP approach, knowingly has not provided learners with enough occasions to freely use English. Another lies in that the revised approach theoretically requires learners to use the language for the proceduralization and automatization of learned structures. Moreover, productive language use particularly invites learners to notice gaps and holes between their use and explicit knowledge, and to restructure their learner languages. Learner English use can be enhanced in fluency-based pedagogical tasks, with authenticity in the context of teaching materials and environments, at the production stage.

Third, it is recommended that teaching procedures should be given flexibility in the order of PPP. Although the PPP order, complying with ACT-R, is another fundamental characteristic of the approach, it can be modified for adapting itself to teaching purposes, materials and learner English proficiency, insofar as the modification does not evade the principle. For example, it is possible to present and practice structures at the end of a lesson, and to begin the next lesson with tasks focused on the structures. Also, it is possible to spend an entire lesson for production tasks that get learners to use structures and lexical items already taught and practiced. This flexibility will help the first and second characteristics to materialize in the procedures.

Naturally, the teaching procedures suggested for the revised PPP approach (Figures 2 & 3) can be used in our context as they are. Even those of TBLT (Figures 4 to 6) can be used in our context with modifications in the use of explicit knowledge. When explicit knowledge is more exploited for fostering learner implicit knowledge, and when structures are taught in a more planned fashion as specified in structural syllabuses, the procedures are what the revised approach recommends, not those of TBLT any more. Importantly, the PPP procedure

should be arranged flexibly for achieving the teaching objectives, so long as they do not deviate from the principles of the revised approach.

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